

Male Sterilization: Vasectomy

How can you get a vasectomy?

A vasectomy requires a physical exam and counseling by a qualified doctor or health care provider. If the vasectomy is paid for by federal or state funds, a 30-day waiting period is required. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

How a vasectomy works:

Vasectomy is simple surgery in which the tubes that carry sperm up to the penis are cut and sealed. Vasectomy is considered a permanent (*not reversible*) method of birth control and should be chosen only if you are sure that you do not want any more children.

After a vasectomy, you will still produce male hormones and sperm, but the sperm will not be able to join with the other fluids in your ejaculation. When sperm cells aren't used, they die and your body will absorb them. The amount of fluid in your ejaculation is not different, except there are no sperm. Your sex drive, your ability to have sex and your orgasms do not change because of a vasectomy.



How the vasectomy is done:

The male sterilization procedure is done in a clinic or doctor's office and takes about 30 minutes. A local anesthetic (like dentists use) is injected into the skin of the sack that holds

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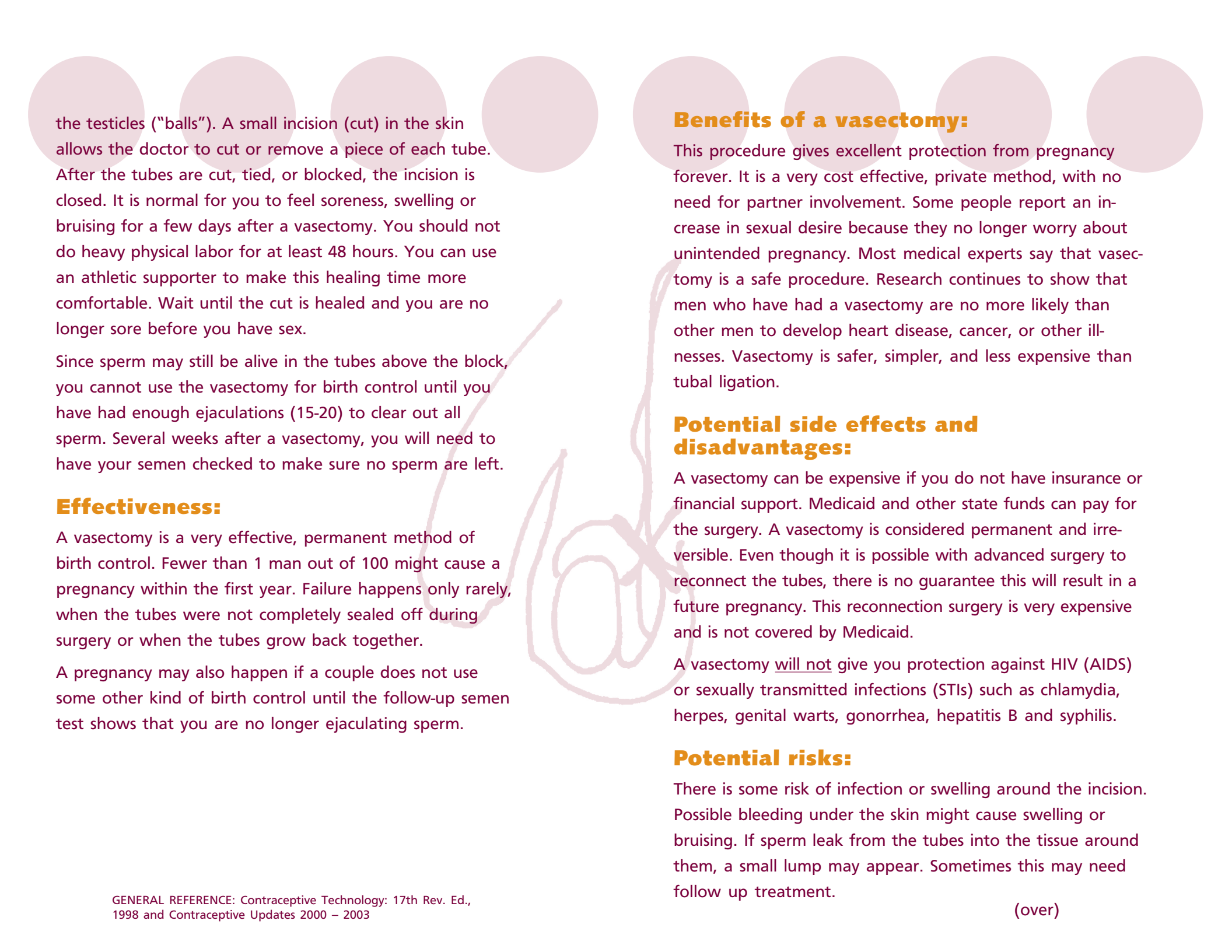
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the testicles ("balls"). A small incision (cut) in the skin allows the doctor to cut or remove a piece of each tube. After the tubes are cut, tied, or blocked, the incision is closed. It is normal for you to feel soreness, swelling or bruising for a few days after a vasectomy. You should not do heavy physical labor for at least 48 hours. You can use an athletic supporter to make this healing time more comfortable. Wait until the cut is healed and you are no longer sore before you have sex.

Since sperm may still be alive in the tubes above the block, you cannot use the vasectomy for birth control until you have had enough ejaculations (15-20) to clear out all sperm. Several weeks after a vasectomy, you will need to have your semen checked to make sure no sperm are left.

Effectiveness:

A vasectomy is a very effective, permanent method of birth control. Fewer than 1 man out of 100 might cause a pregnancy within the first year. Failure happens only rarely, when the tubes were not completely sealed off during surgery or when the tubes grow back together.

A pregnancy may also happen if a couple does not use some other kind of birth control until the follow-up semen test shows that you are no longer ejaculating sperm.

Benefits of a vasectomy:

This procedure gives excellent protection from pregnancy forever. It is a very cost effective, private method, with no need for partner involvement. Some people report an increase in sexual desire because they no longer worry about unintended pregnancy. Most medical experts say that vasectomy is a safe procedure. Research continues to show that men who have had a vasectomy are no more likely than other men to develop heart disease, cancer, or other illnesses. Vasectomy is safer, simpler, and less expensive than tubal ligation.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

A vasectomy can be expensive if you do not have insurance or financial support. Medicaid and other state funds can pay for the surgery. A vasectomy is considered permanent and irreversible. Even though it is possible with advanced surgery to reconnect the tubes, there is no guarantee this will result in a future pregnancy. This reconnection surgery is very expensive and is not covered by Medicaid.

A vasectomy will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

There is some risk of infection or swelling around the incision. Possible bleeding under the skin might cause swelling or bruising. If sperm leak from the tubes into the tissue around them, a small lump may appear. Sometimes this may need follow up treatment.

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